

Back Yard Birds & Coffee

The Yellow-Billed Cuckoo

By
Clyde Wilson

Cuckoo. What thoughts does that word conjure up in your mind? Crazy, not sane?

For me it brings back memories of being at my grandmother's home in Winston-Salem, N.C., many years ago (or should I say once upon a time). Every hour the little bird would come out of the clock. I would lie there in bed and count the cuckoos and could tell the time in the dark, pretty cool for a 6-year-old.

I never really gave that Cuckoo bird much thought until recently as I read in my bird guide that the Cuckoo is a family of birds that eats hairy caterpillars. The Yellow-Billed Cuckoo can be seen right here in Mecklenburg County during the summer before it migrates back to South America for the winter.

It has been on my target list for several months now, and it happened yesterday (that was Saturday for me)

as I traveled the high seas (that's Lake Gaston in a kayak while a couple of fishing boats with Seven Marine 557's, the world's most powerful outboards, and a couple of jet skis fly by like you are invisible). I was able to turn the kayak in the direction of the man-made tsunami and ride the wave into a secluded cove where only kayakers can go.

It was there in the quiet and peaceful surroundings of the lake that a Yellow-Billed Cuckoo showed up. I must have taken 10 pics, and all I were blurry except for one, which is shown on this page. As I've mentioned in previous articles, it's always exciting when a new bird shows up. I marveled in this experience for almost an hour before heading back into the high seas and home to write this article.

However, on the way a teenager asks me a question, "Do you ever doubt the existence of God?"



A Yellow-Billed Cuckoo

A great question as he is growing into a young man and searching for life's answers. My reply, "I have," as many of us probably have at one time or another, especially when life happens.

I'm trying to relate my answer to birding. My response was, "I knew birds were all around but never gave them much attention until several months ago. Since then I have learned there are 10,000 species worldwide, all of them unique and different. The Yellow-Billed Cuckoo is just one of those 10,000 and one of the 300 species right here in Mecklenburg that I have been searching for, and I found him but was

not specifically looking for him at the time. That's how it is with God. As you are asking and searching for Him with your heart, He will show up, and you will realize that He has been there all the time and that He is in every detail of your life."

What a great way to start the day searching for God. That's what I like about birding so much, and Cuckoo takes on a new meaning for me now and creation speaks out, "God is real."

The Hokie Birds

This past week we traveled to Blacksburg for Joel's orientation and discovered more than one

Hokie bird. Of course, I'm implying that all birds in the Virginia Tech area are Hokie birds, not just the turkey.

The hotels were filled up, however, we managed to find a lovely bed and breakfast in which to stay. As we got out of the car the first sound I heard was a new one. It was the song of a House Wren. Add one more to my life list bringing the total of species identified since last winter to 110, only 9,890 to go. I knew I should have started birding earlier in life. Only if I were a cat with lives, I might have time to see them all... or eat them.

The next morning after breakfast I walk out into the cool air of the Blue Ridge and heard this "drink your tea" sound. For some of you know that is the sound of the Eastern Towhee. I shared that with the B&B owner, Linda Slayer, and she mentioned that her granddaughter came in the other day and said, "Nannie Linda, I heard a bird say trick or treat." Same bird, how funny is that.

At Tech we spotted 200 Mallards, three domestic

ducks, one catbird (though there are probably many more on campus), one Grackle, three Crows, one American Goldfinch, three Cardinals, two Robins, three Canadian Geese and three Blue Jays. Also pictured are the Blue jay and two new Hokies, Joel and Luke.

Birding news

Congrats to Wendy Pierson for the correct answer to the Bald Headed Cardinal Quiz. It was molting. She wins a personal kayak tour on our beautiful Southern Virginia Wild Blueway trail (wasp spray included).

Kerr Lake Bird Clubs meets this Wednesday from 7 to 8 p.m. in Bracey at 3410 Highway 903. Virginia Beach trip is July 31-Aug. 1.

Send in your birding experiences or sightings and the answer to this week's quiz question — "What does a Cuckoo in the nest mean and why?"

Clyde Wilson can be reached at joinclyde@gmail.com



A Blue Jay



Two new Hokie birds, Luke and Joel Wilson.



An American Goldfinch



Patient-Focused Care in Clarksville

Sentara is dedicated to providing the highest-quality care to residents of Clarksville and the surrounding area. That's why we're pleased to announce that Dr. Rachael Burton is now a member of the team at Sentara Clarksville Family Medicine. Dr. Burton joins a phenomenal health care team that includes family nurse practitioners Jessica Ruff and Vicki Whitfield. Dr. Burton is committed to providing comprehensive plans of care for her patients and helping them achieve their best possible health.

Meet Our Newest Team Member:

Rachael A. Burton, D.O.

- D.O. – Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine
- Residency in Family Medicine at Chesterfield Family Practice

To make an appointment, call
Sentara Clarksville Family Medicine at 434-374-5344

Sentara Clarksville Family Medicine
115 College Street
Clarksville, Virginia 23927
434-374-5344